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BANGALORE BOY

Wordsworth could well have had my childhood days in mind when he wrote, "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, but to be young was very heaven!". For Bangalore between the wars was a place and time of joyous memories which, more and more as I grow older, I recall with deep nostalgia and delight, but also with regret for the changes that time has wrought. It had the best of weather, pure air, clean water, fine schools, a moral climate and cheap living. Today, over seventy years later in distant Australia, where so many young people complain of boredom and seem to lead unfulfilling lives when they could quite easily be living wholesomely instead, I feel I should try and share with my grandchildren Simon and Yasmin some of the joys I knew as a boy. Though they live close to us in Canberra, I do not see them often enough, nor do they have the time to listen to much of what I would like to tell them. Hence this memoir of my early life in the hope that they and others of their generation, - my late brother Ralph's grandsons Ben and Thomas Tracey and John and David Kurien, - will find joy in reading them. It would be pleasant to think that some day they may even want to visit India, and Bangalore in particular, the better to share my memories, much though these places have changed for the worse.

I had a very happy childhood, marred only by occasional bouts of hysteria suffered by my mother as she went through her change in life when I was small. These were often accompanied by severe beatings and uncontrolled screaming which left me shaken each time. These traumas must have unconsciously left their psychological mark, for years later, at the age of thirty three, I had a nervous breakdown accompanied by all the symptoms of severe clinical depression that lasted well over a year. This probably acted as a

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catharsis, for I have had no further trouble since. But the effects of such episodes at the time were as nothing compared to the precious gifts we inherited. My mother's outbursts notwithstanding, we had the wisest and most caring of parents who passed on to us much that was of value, prime amongst them being good health, right example, sound advice and, some say, brains. I was the youngest of eleven children and the only one not born in the districts where my father was a provincial forest officer. He had started service at the lowest level and thus never reached the top in position or salary, so our big family had always to live frugally, avoiding extravagance and restricting our demands on the material side of life. My father's sayings, that enough was plenty, and that ignorance was the eighth deadly sin, were truths we came to appreciate more and more as we grew up, and never regretted having to apply to ourselves as we went through life.

Prices were unbelievably low by today's standards, so that we never lacked for the essentials. But we felt the need for economy, more especially after our father died within five years of retiring, leaving neither savings nor family pension for our mother and the three younger children who had yet to finish their education. His modest pension ceased with his death, and what little he had saved - thirteen thousand rupees in government bonds which he had to encash prematurely - had all been spent before he died, mainly on the higher education of the elder children. Fortunately for us younger ones, they found good positions just in time to help us complete ours. The effect of all this on our character was altogether beneficial. Through minor deprivations we learnt to make do or do without, to have consideration for others, and to draw together as a family. Especially did we learn to share, whether it was one another's clothes, or space in the bedroom or time in the bath. While we naturally had our childish quarrels, these never lasted long or affected our sense of family solidarity, cemented as it was by the good advice of our parents and our pride in the all-round achievements of the elder children. It reinforced our innate abilities and our confidence in ourselves, confirming us in our belief that if we studied hard, played well and aimed high, improving on the gifts given to us by our

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parents, success would be ours when we grew up, and all would be well.

Three thousand feet up on the Deccan plateau and two hundred miles inland from Madras, Bangalore cantonment was a most pleasant place in which to grow up. It was set in the green and rolling countryside of Mysore State, then the realm of an Indian Maharaja, and lay on the sheltered side of the Western Ghats. It had a cool, healthy and equable climate that seemed like perpetual autumn, ideal for European troops, boarding-schools and pensioners. Here, on land surrounding the villages of Ulsoor and Shoolay east of the old city and fort of Bangalore, arose a completely new military station. City and Cantonment were separated from each other by a green belt that is still the most attractive feature of what is now a great metropolis and state capital. Though most of the cantonment's private gardens that I knew as a boy have now given place to town dwellings of stone and cement, it is still called the Garden City. Cubbon Park, one of its most attractive public features and centre-piece of the green belt, remains unspoiled. Named for General Sir Mark Cubbon, Chief Commissioner of Mysore State for the first thirty of its fifty years under direct British rule, it was a favourite place for our holiday walks and outings. It had well-kept lawns and beds of flowers in profusion, the most memorable being masses of canna in a variety of striking colours; a bandstand, a golf course and tennis courts; and an artificial Bamboo Island, scene of many of my scout excursions on a Sunday afternoon. Its riding trails are no longer used, but its gracious Grecian-style buildings still stand, though overshadowed now by a massive new structure, patterned on ancient Indian lines, that houses the new legislature and secretariat of the state, now renamed Karnataka.

Near by were other open areas such as New Field, bought by St Joseph's in the 1920s and large enough to contain three school cricket grounds; Sampangy Tank, now drained and home to a fine sports institute and stadium; small orchards that gave us a variety of local fruit, but now built over; and High Grounds, site of prestigious residences and the Jewel Filters through which the town's water

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supply flowed. Further away were the lines of the Mysore Lancers, one of the Raja's armed forces, since absorbed by the Indian army, whose lances, pennants and splendid uniforms capped by turbans embroidered in blue and silver lent much colour to our many parades. In another direction lay Lal Bagh or the Red Garden, laid out by Tipoo's father Haider Ali for their summer pleasure. Its wide expanse of red laterite soil is still home to a variety of rare trees collected from many parts of the world, and though its deer park, aviary and monkey cage where I first saw an orang-utan and a mandrill with its vividly striped face are gone, its lovely lawns and trees still provide a popular place for picnickers and botanists.

The British retained this sense of spaciousness when expanding their new cantonment, but there were unfortunate exceptions, some of them avoidable. While the original villages inevitably lost their rural surroundings as the cantonment grew, a congested bazaar and commercial area that marked the broad division between north and south were allowed to develop, as were the servants "patches" with their flag-stoned alleys and clustered houses. Some of the new roads were far too narrow and spoke of the penny-pinching ways of John Company rather than of thought for future convenience or civic beauty. The military establishments were, of course, well spread out, and together with other visible symbols of British administration and the cosmopolitan culture that gradually emerged, imparted to Bangalore its distinctive flavour. Interspersed with the military areas were the "towns" or living areas inhabited mostly by Anglo-Indians, with here and there a park or lake to add to the pleasant ambience. The new civilian population were encouraged to allow sufficient land around their houses to grow the gardens for which Bangalore was to become renowned. They had beds of pretty flowers and foliage in endless variety, beautiful shade-trees that blossomed each season in reds, yellows, purples and whites, and even small orchards.

I was born in "Teddy Lodge", a small house on Curley Street in Richmond Town. It was the first place my mother rented (we were never able to afford a house of our own) when she returned to her home town of Bangalore with the children to start their serious

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education, leaving our father to continue to work in the mofussil. Its verandah looked directly out on to the road, so we had no front garden, but I do remember a beautiful laburnum that stood near the gate. Its masses of yellow blossoms that hung like colourful Chinese lanterns from its stems are among my earliest memories of beautiful things. Others are of Bangalore's benign weather, gentle breezes, blue skies, and especially of scudding clouds which fascinated me as I looked at them by moonlight, for they made it look as if it was the moon that moved. We had a tamarind tree at the back of the house that yielded long pods of brown, sticky fruit with large seeds contained in a loose, brittle skin that was easy to peel when ripe. Our cook would sometimes pulp the sour fruit and add it to our curry or pepper-water, making it so tasty that it set one's mouth watering even before it came to the table. The tree, with its many contorted branches, was easy to climb, but my brother Cyril, next in age to me, once slipped and fell heavily when half-way up and lay unconscious for a short time. He had just started visibly to sit up when my mother, who never did things by halves, rushed out with an earthen jug of water which she threw full in his face, thus making doubly sure of his recovery!

Behind us lived an elderly person named Legge. He had a big house set in a large compound, very appropriate for his four (successive) wives and his many children. His older sons played hockey with my elder brothers, but I remember him mainly for the poultry he kept in a run that leaned against our back wall. The early morning crow of his prize cock, followed soon after by the bugler sounding reveille from the near-by army lines, were the first sounds I remember waking to when I was a child. Opposite our house was the rear wall of the Home For The Aged run by the Little Sisters Of The Poor. At that time their residents were entirely Anglo-Indian, and the income of the Home came, as now, wholly from charity. The nuns would come around once a month, thanking and blessing us for whatever my mother was able to give them. It did not matter that she was a firm Protestant (they probably prayed for her all the more fervently on this account); her heart was big - and besides, all her children were Catholic. Such simple ecumenism was well ahead of

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the times, to judge by the vigorous arguments over religion we youngsters used to have with our Protestant friends as we turned seven and entered the age of sure knowledge. We tempered our disagreements as we grew up, but not to the point of surrendering such visible signs of our sectarianism as our separate graveyards, which, incidentally, lay a short distance from where we lived, - Catholic on one side of a road, Protestant on the other. Next door to the Home For The Aged was Baldwin Boys High School, a well-run boarding-school that was heavily supported by Methodist funds from America. Many of my friends went to it, and I never failed to attend their annual Sports Day at which their excellent gymnastic display was a special feature. I also admired the smart way their boarders marched to attend service every Sunday at the little Methodist Church not far from where we lived, and beyond which lay Baldwin Girls.

The Little Sisters Home, Baldwin Boys School and Arab Lines were separated from the regimental headquarters of Queen Victoria's Own Madras Sappers and Miners by Hosur Road. This highway ran twenty five miles south through Mysore territory to the small British town of Hosur where there was a large military grass-farm and cattle research station. The name and regiment are both gone now, the unit moved to other lines and called more prosaically the Madras Engineering Group, the men's tall khaki pill-box turbans replaced by more practical but less picturesque navy-blue berets. They once formed part of the Company's Madras Army that included the famous Tamil infantrymen whose eagerness to go in with the bayonet in battle so surprised their European officers. The present-day Tamil Tiger insurgents of northern Sri Lanka, or Ceylon as I knew it, are showing the same suicidal dash in fighting for a homeland of their own even as I write. Margaret, the second of my three sisters, who played nanny to me while still a young girl herself, used to wheel me in my pram past the Sappers' parade ground to let me see them at drill. The movements of hundreds of arms and feet in perfect precision, and the single sound made by hundreds of hands as they slapped their rifles when presenting arms with bayonets fixed and flashing, were a marvel to me. I learnt to hum and later to whistle

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every bugle-call, from morning Reveille to the Last Post at night, and still remember the words the British troops put to each of them that I learnt when I grew up. Part of the duty of the sentry doing his beat in front of the guard-room was to strike the hour on a large brass gong or “ghurrie” that hung from a tripod. We set our clocks by this, and rechecked them with the “wink”, the momentary dousing by the power-house of all the town’s lights at exactly nine o’clock every night.

Mr Legge’s cock and the Sappers’ reveille were not the only early morning sounds that I remember waking to, for Bangalore was a place of church bells, all of which sounded the Angelus at dawn, and again at noon and sunset. There were the chapel bells of the Little Sisters, the huge bells of St Patrick’s Cathedral where we worshiped, and the bells of the Good Shepherd Convent across the way from St Patrick’s. All three of my sisters schooled at the convent, until my father, a good Catholic himself, shocked the parish by withdrawing the two younger ones (the eldest had passed out by then) after a nun unjustly expelled my sister Win from class one day. He then compounded the scandal by sending them to Bishop Cotton’s, the best known Protestant school in the town. We four brothers all went to St Joseph’s, which lay opposite the convent on Residency Road. Pat and Ralph, the elder two, had passed out by the time I left St Anthony’s and entered St Joseph’s in 1929. Cyril bridged the gap, enabling us four brothers to form an unbroken line of Straceys at St Joseph’s for twenty four years until 1938, when I passed my Intermediate from the college section. (For good measure, my father taught drawing at the school for a term soon after he retired.)

Hosur Road extended north past Johnson Market where our servant did the daily shopping. Next door was the mosque that served Arab Lines, and further on a municipal health centre known as the Saadut Dispensary where I remember getting a plague injection with a large needle during one of our rare rat-falls. Opposite the mosque and dispensary was All Saints Anglican Church and its attached Cantonment Orphanage for Anglo-Indian boys. The more

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senior among them marched every day to school at Bishop Cotton's, and would sometimes play cricket against some of us lads from Richmond Town. Passing by on a Sunday one could hear the entire congregation of All Saints singing familiar hymns and responses, and that too in English. It was something I liked in preference to the practice at our St Patrick's, where all the business was in Latin and took place mostly between priest and choir. The church and orphanage occupied the corner of Hosur and Richmond Road, after crossing which Hosur changed its name to Brigade Road. On it stood Shoolay police station which served the entire southern area of the cantonment. At this point Brigade Road split to form Museum Road that diverged slightly west. To the rear of the station lay extensive church property that included St Patrick's Cathedral, its vicarage and its Anglo-Indian boys orphanage. Its main entrance lay on Residency Road which cut across both Museum and Brigade Road and led east to Mayo Hall, our stately municipal office, and west to an area occupied by a complex of Anglo-Indian schools and St Joseph's college.

There were a variety of shops and business houses on Brigade Road, including the firm of Snaize & Co, Undertakers and Sculptors; the Opera House which boasted a balcony for upper-class seating and was used as a cinema; a sports-goods shop run by Moss, a retired British Warrant Officer who wore a stiffly waxed moustache; and an English-type pub known as the Old Bull and Bush whose bar, billiards table, and plain dining-room were patronised mostly by Tommies who, for eight annas, could get a "meat and two veg" to go with their glass of beer. The road continued north until it crossed Bangalore's main parade ground, when it became Cavalry Road, which led through a commercial area and an Indian quarter to St John's Hill. This triune highway formed the cantonment's main north-south artery. The parade ground was a great expanse of elevated plain known as The Maidan, a common name for any large, open space in India, that stretched nearly a mile east from Cubbon Park. Along the edge of the park opposite the maidan was a well-maintained vista with a marble statue of Queen Victoria at one end and of her son Edward VII at the other. At a corner of the maidan, on

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a portion ceded by the military after my time, the Bangalore Corporation put up a cricket stadium and a statue of Mahatma Gandhi. The site of this statue caused some unease, for it does appear as though the one-time Empress of India, orb in hand and dressed in full regalia, is looking down her nose at the half-clad Father of the Nation!

Along the north of the maidan ran Cubbon Road, lined almost entirely by army buildings, including the BRV cinema theatre to which were attached a pub, a billiards room and the AFI armoury; St Andrew's Church with its tall, red clock-tower, behind which stood "Kirkton", the house belonging to my mother's uncle John Lawrence where she grew up; and Baird Barracks, named for a General who was prominent at the battle of Seringapatam. It was permanently occupied by a battalion of British infantry, whose names, such as the Royal West Kents, the Highland Light Infantry and the South Staffordshires, still come back to me. A generation later the West Kents were to gain a place among the heroes of Kohima, where British, Indian and Gurkha forces withstood a long and bloody siege before being finally relieved and beating back the Japanese who had earlier overrun Burma. Many a wink would have passed over the barrack wall between Tommy and local lass, for our girls were the only ones the soldiers could speak to and even make friends with. (It always roused our elders' indignation when a Tommy remarked on how well we spoke English. We on our part often had difficulty following *their* accents and dialects.) One or two local Anglo-Indian lads usually managed to enlist in each British battalion, but these were invariably fair enough to pass as Europeans - and so the Colonel's scrutiny.

Besides the British infantry battalion, there was always a battery of Royal Artillery, and sometimes a detachment of cavalry as well. One of these, the Queen's Bays, I remember well for its mounted band, a most impressive sight to a little boy. There were also contingents of Indian troops of various arms and services. They occupied places with such names as Assaye Lines, named for one of Wellington's victories over the Marathas, and Nilsandra Lines of

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fonder memory, home of the Sappers and Miners within earshot of our house on Curley Street. The military hospital and the old military graveyard (no necessary connection) stood on one of the oldest army sites in the cantonment. This lay on the road to Whitefield, once a small Anglo-Indian settlement, past the Agram airfield, an earthen landing-strip east of the town. We had yet to hear words like “airports” and “air-bases” then. Today it is an international airport and the centre of the country’s aeronautical research, construction and flight-testing industry, all of which developed from the first aircraft-maintenance unit set up there during World War II. It was the beginning of the transformation of the garden city that I knew into the industrial metropolis that it is today. Bangalore has more recently become world-famous for its computer technology based on the brains of its population, its institutions of higher learning and its (once) clean air.

Along the southern length of the maidan was the cantonment’s broadest road, then appropriately named South Parade but since renamed Mahatma Gandhi Road (and now sadly and predictably abbreviated to just M G Road). On it were many handsome buildings housing commercial firms, cinemas, high-class shops and restaurants. Of the latter, I particularly remember Bacala’s, run by an Italian, where we would refresh ourselves with fancy cakes, ice-cream and lemonade after watching the Empire Day parade held on Queen Victoria’s birthday. At either end was a beautiful church: Trinity to the east, which served the garrison’s Protestant soldiers who marched there smartly every Sunday morning, and St Mark’s to the west, its big dome contrasting with Trinity’s two-storeyed tower in the distance. Each has suffered through falling revenues and the demands of commerce. The forecourt of Trinity now displays large, ugly hoardings that hide its beauty but bring in rent, and part of St Mark’s compound has been sold to make way for a restaurant and grocery store. Neither would have been permitted by an enlightened civic administration, something that Bangalore, along with most other towns and cities in the country, now sadly lacks. Part of St Mark’s was badly damaged in a fire in 1923. Tommies from Baird Barracks rushed to help put it out, and in the aftermath, one of them,

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holding a kerchief to his face, was heard to say, “I think I’ve got a piece o’ church in me eye”, a story my mother liked to tell.

St Mark’s Road, which led south past the church from the maidan, has since been renamed Field-Marshal Carriappa Road after the country’s first Indian Commander-in-Chief, but is still called St Mark’s. It, too, boasted many fine buildings like the Bowring Institute, once a literary society but now just a popular club that retains the name of Cubbon’s successor as Chief Commissioner of Mysore; the old Imperial Bank (now the State Bank) where a stained-glass window bearing the British Royal Coat of Arms is still to be seen in a main room, a reminder of the days when it served as the Residency; and two schools, Bishop Cotton’s Girls and Boys, that face each other across the road. Around the corner from Bishop Cotton’s Boys on Residency Road stands the old Bangalore United Services Club whose members when I was young were exclusively British army officers and other European officials. The closest we got to it was within earshot of the military band that used to play there on special occasions. It is now the Bangalore Club, open to all who can manage to find a vacancy and to pay its high fees. Near the northern end of St Mark’s Road, opposite the church, was a rambling old private building that was once an army mess. When no longer required as such, it was converted into rooms, in one set of which our mother made her home for the last thirty years of her life, and from where I set out on mine in 1943. It has since been demolished and its grounds made available by the owners, a Hindu charitable trust, for the construction of a new Stracey Memorial School in place of an earlier one started there by my brother Ralph in memory of our parents who spared nothing for our education.

Cavalry Road led north from the maidan down to a crowded area of shops, streets and alleys, the best known and most used being the aptly named Commercial Street. Here, along a road that allowed no more than two cars to pass comfortably, stood shops that sold you anything from imported material for dresses, suits and shirts to watches, nails, paper and solar topees. Names like Tootal, Horrocks, Hanava and Palm Beach were commonplace, their products all

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selling for a fraction of today's prices. Its tailors - Gundoo Rao, Bombay Tailoring, Wahab, and Syed Bakr (who, for our convenience, kindly spelt it Bawker,) - were renowned throughout the south, and the suits they made were a match in cut and fall for anything out of Saville Row. Good shoes, at a price, could be had from Ruben Moses. I got my first suit as a boy from Gundoo Rao, a navy-blue serge, as I recall, for twelve rupees, while my sisters had no difficulty finding a lady's tailor who, sitting cross-legged in a space no more than twelve feet square, could copy for a mere three rupees any fashion from the latest English magazine they handed him. Prices stayed incredibly low until after the war. My first full-length suit, made to order and not a hand-me-down as up till then, was a stylish grey light-woollen stripe with a roll-collar, and cost just thirty rupees. The matching shirt, tie and socks came to another six. Ready-made drill slacks could be had for just three rupees from Western Stores, and a pair of children's shoes for a mere two. And if there was anything you could not get from Commercial Street, there was always Thread and Needle Street, Biscuit Bazaar, Jewellers Lane or Russell Market, all within easy walking distance, - a shopper's paradise. Across the road from Russell Market lay an area known as the *goodge*, a second-hand market that also served as a thieves bazaar. It consisted of a bewildering maze of alleys and stalls where one could find goods ranging from car parts and clothes to tools and text books. I bought most of my school books there at the start of each year, and many a half-used cricket and hockey ball, besides our tennis nets which needed only slight repair with stout twine to suffice. Prices have since soared to unconscionable levels, but the cheap living of those days was a real boon for the poor and those hit by the Great Depression.

For those interested, our then Indian currency consisted of rupees, annas and pies. Twelve pies made an anna, and sixteen annas a rupee. The official rate of exchange for an English pound was an odd thirteen rupees five annas and four pies, (one-third of forty rupees). For ease of reckoning, ten rupees equalled fifteen shillings, an anna fractionally more than a penny. And to make our conversion sums in class more challenging, we had to contend with imperial

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weights and measures like inches, feet, yards, furlongs and miles; ounces, pounds and hundred-weights; and Indian measures with names like maunds, tolas, visses, ollocks and seers.

The area around Commercial Street seemed to me the cantonment's biggest "Indian" locality. Its residents were mostly the tradesman of the place whose quarters were often above their shops, or municipal employees who lived down narrow alleys near-by. North, up an incline, was the locality known as St John's Hill with its Anglican church of the same name. Here there was another set of our "towns" - Cleveland, Fraser, Richards, Benson and Cox - served by schools, parks, churches and grocery stores. My mother's father, Henry Robert Cruickshanks, who was a Chemist and Druggist, once had a dispensary in St John's Hill, and my father's sister Win, a widow whose Italian husband's name was Bajo (pronounced Bai-yo), had a small cottage in Fraser Town. Despite her habit of smoking cigars that were apt to stain her teeth, and a tendency to let rip with an occasional expletive, I loved her for her good nature and the care she gave me when, still a boarder and with no family left in Bangalore, I spent my Christmas holidays with her in 1935 and later my first few months in college. Bangalore was expanding in that direction then, but still only as a domestic town. The great factories and depots that came up after the war and which would change its character for ever - and for worse - were yet to come. Up till then we had only a cigarette factory run by Imperial Tobaccos and a textile mill in the city that qualified as major industries. Near St John's Hill were other military centres including one near Ulsoor Lake where the sepoys carried out exercises involving water-crossings. It was actually large enough to be called a lake, and as there was boating to be had, we spent an occasional Sunday afternoon rowing on it and picnicking on its islands. The locality boasted many a fine residence and compound, and bore stylish names like Kensington and Osborne, altogether a pleasant contrast to the congested area of Ulsoor not far away.

Though my parents spent the first eighteen years of their married life in the districts (generally called the mofussil), and ten of their

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eleven children were born there, we were very much a Bangalore family. My mother was born on St John's Hill where her father had his practice. Both her parents died early, when she and her siblings were still in their teens, but they were taken over by her mother's brother, John Lawrance, a well-to-do lawyer who gave them a comfortable home, a moral upbringing and a good education including the piano. My mother left Bangalore when she was just nineteen to teach music and eurhythmics in a mission school far up the East Coast in Cocanada (now Kakinada) where my father was a Forest Ranger. They met and married almost at once, and spent their district days entirely in the Telugu country where, among other things, they buried four of their infant children. When the time came to give the others an uninterrupted education, they found that the fees for boarding-school were more than they could afford. So my mother brought them in 1920 to Bangalore where she set up house, visiting my father occasionally during the remaining seven years of his service. This was quite a common practice in Bangalore, for it was known more for its fine schools, pleasant weather and low cost of living than for opportunities for work. The cigarette factory offered a few jobs, as did the textile mill and the railway loco-shed in the City and the odd motor workshop and dance-band in the cantonment. The best jobs of all were as teachers or professors in Bangalore's many schools and colleges, but it was in the districts of Madras and Mysore that men sought the work and security that were available there, if only mainly at middle level. Bangalore was the place for their children's education and their own retirement. And thus did I come to be born there.

Our first home was in Curley Street, but as the children grew up we had to find larger and larger houses. When I was five we shifted, first to Cornwell Road and then to Prime Street, spending a year at each. Both were close to Richmond Park and Mud Tank, which gave us plenty of space to play. Our last true family home, which we occupied from 1928 to 1935, was in Rose Lane, still within easy reach of the park and tank and a twenty-minute walk from school. There, after the three elder children grew up and left the nest, we younger ones stayed to finish our education. Then, four years after

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my father died on New Year's Day, 1932, our family reached a crucial turning-point. My mother and I were the only ones left at home, and maintaining it for just the two of us became too costly, especially when we had to meet my brother Cyril's fees and other expenses at the Indian Military Academy. These came to more than a thousand rupees a term for five terms, money that we just did not have. So reluctantly accepting an offer to stay with my father's brother Tom in Burma, and sending me in as a boarder, she sadly broke up home in mid-1935 and left for Rangoon. It is that home that I recall most vividly and with the greatest affection and nostalgia, for it was there that we lived together longest as a family, and where I spent a truly happy boyhood.

We lived comfortably in Rose Lane. We had more room to live in than in our previous houses, and the compound was large enough for us to have a tennis court fringed by trees on one side, and a small orchard on the other. We swept, watered, rolled and marked the court ourselves, and once even ran a tournament for our neighbours and friends, when all agreed it was as good as the one at the All Saints Institute near-by. Apart from this amenity and its rather more generous floor-space, our house was very much like any other in Richmond Town. Each was a gardener's paradise, with beds of lovely flowers, potted plants, foliage and creepers, all in extraordinary array. No colour seemed missing from our beds of roses, dahlias, cannas, petunias and others I can name, while a variety of bougainvillea, hibiscus, poinsettia and queen-of-the-night, set off by crotons, ferns, coleus and other foliage, caught the eye at every turn. I soon learnt the names of the scarlet gul-mohur, the purple jacaranda, and the pink and white frangipani, just a few of the flowering trees that grew in one or other of our houses. Of fruit trees we had mango, wood-apple, jamun, luquat, custard-apple, lime, jack-fruit, banana (which we called plantain) and delicious papaya that seemed to thrive particularly well in our area. Strangely enough, we had neither guava nor pomelo, both of which grew in plenty in some of our neighbours' houses. But garden walls were not so high nor we ourselves so lacking in enterprise that we went without them as soon as they grew ripe! There was not a tree that we did not climb,

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whether to pluck a fruit or cut a Y for a catapult (with which my aim, fortunately for the birds and squirrels in our compound, was not good). We played “Monkey up the Tree”, a sort of “last touch” that involved escaping as high as one could climb, and carved our initials on some prominent trunk or branch and “plussed” them with those of one’s true love - of which, at about the age of six (and continuously thereafter) I never seemed to have any lack. I suppose I was just a very natural little boy, as prone to calf-love as any other of my age, and Richmond Town, as indeed the whole of Bangalore, had plenty of pretty young girls, who grew up even prettier, to keep my interest stirred. My wife-to-be lived opposite Baldwin Girls School in a house that backed on to the park. I was aware of her in a special sort of way, and she says she remembers seeing me playing there, a skinny lad of about ten, wearing black stockings and shorts. I did not try to send her my love then, and it was not till we were past sixteen that we met - and I did.

The houses proper were built on broadly similar lines. All walls were of brick and mortar, the roofs were covered by pan-tiles or the kiln-fired variety called Mangalore, and the floors, when not tiled, were laid with Cuddapah slabs, a kind of slate named for the district where it was quarried. Many houses were fitted with a special feature of Bangalore known as “monkey tops”, pointed hoods made of thin wooden slats, invariably painted green picked out in white, that served as window-shades. Most had front verandahs that were enclosed by wooden or wire trellises to keep the crows away, with sometimes a porch in front where carriages or cars could draw up. (As with a house, a car was never within our means.) Apart from a mounted buffalo-head or the antlers of a sambar or black-buck, plenty of which were then to be had in the jungles of Madras or Mysore, most verandahs contained no more than a few cane chairs, a teapoy and one or two peg-tables, so called because one placed one’s “peg” or small measure of whisky or other drink on them. In place of shikar trophies, ours had a picture of the Sacred Heart above the inner door which I remember only too well, for I once accidentally scooped a football onto it, bringing it crashing down, with dire results for both glass and frame, but with only a mild rebuke from my father.

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Curtains made of long, coloured glass beads were often used to separate the verandah from the sitting-room beyond. This room, in contrast to the verandah, was usually heavily furnished with teak or rose-wood sofas, upholstered chairs, corner shelves, glass-cases filled with photos and bric-a-brac, and woollen carpets for which Bangalore was famous. A centre-table, more peg-tables, a family portrait and a framed print or two would complete the setting. In ours, in addition, there was always a large and well-stocked book-shelf and a piano. Anglo-Indians were a musical lot, and it was quite common to hear the sounds of piano or violin coming from one house or other when walking down a street. The sitting-room gave on to the dining-room and thence to a back verandah which, when walled off at each end, provided a store-room and a pantry. Bedrooms, dressing-rooms, and bathrooms which also served as toilets ran along each side of the house, the bathrooms being always fitted with rear doors to allow the sweeper entry. For a big family like ours, dressing-rooms were a luxury and came in handy as extra bedrooms.

Kitchen, stables, servants-quarters and outhouses (one of which was called a go-down and used for junk), were separate from the main house and were usually built against the back compound wall, while tucked away in a rear corner was the servants latrine. An essential servant was the sweeper, usually a female called a *lutchee*, who swabbed the floors and attended to the commodes. These lined one wall of our bathrooms, and when all the children were at home and there was not sufficient room for all the commodes inside, mine was placed in an outhouse which I would then sometimes have to share with an indignant broody hen. Commodes would be taken from their wooden or wrought-iron stands at least once a day to the outside latrine and their contents emptied into a receptacle. It was removed after dark (hence the term “night soil”) by a municipal scavenger in a large barrel fitted on a bullock-cart. This procession of the “Queen of the Night” was a daily event whose olfactory impact was unmistakable and would cause us to hold our breath until it had passed. It was only after 1930 or so that modern sewerage was installed throughout the town, and then not every house was promptly connected.

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We slept on mattresses that were stuffed with cotton or coir, and our beds were fitted with wooden testers from which hung the nets that saved us from the mosquitoes that were Bangalore's only bane. These, though not malarial then, were a great irritation and nuisance. They remain so even today, with the added danger that they are now filarial. This nasty import, fortunately not as yet pandemic, came from the West Coast after Bangalore was absorbed in Karnataka following the reorganisation of states according to regional languages and the greater mobility of population that came with it. Wardrobes, which we called almirahs, a chest-of-drawers or two, and desks for study and home-work had also to be fitted into the bed-rooms, making it a tight squeeze. Neatness was thus important if things were not to go astray, so I learnt to arrange my shoes in line beneath my cot before I went to sleep, make my bed myself as soon as I got up, and, when I was young, secure my soft toys (teddy-bear, woolly lamb, golliwog and eskimo) that my mother had preserved for fifteen years from Ralph's babyhood. Another requirement was to put our dirty clothes at once into that most essential of receptacles, the soiled-linen basket, which was always to be found in the corner of one of the rooms to await the weekly arrival of our dhobi or washerman.

The main feature of our dining-room was a large trestle table, as firm as a rock and rounded at the ends, which my father had had made for his large family some years before I was born. I sat at it as a child and whenever I was at home on holiday from college or on leave from service, home being wherever my mother lived in Bangalore during her latter years. It saddened me to find it had gone to an auctioneer after her death in 1971. We also had an old, double-wick oil-lamp for which my father had designed a wooden and brass stand for use on wall or table before electricity reached the mofussil. I remember it from my visits to him in the districts, and was sorry to see it sold with the home that Cyril and I bought for our retirement in Coonoor in the Nilgiris, but where only Cyril lived till his death in 1988. We had an assortment of dining-chairs, no two of which seemed to match. Some were of the bent-wood type made from thick

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cane curved into shape under heat and fitted with plaited rattan seats. For a sideboard we used a dinner-wagon, a three-tiered, shelved contraption which bore the weight of a mass of miscellaneous crockery, cutlery and glassware. On it lay our serviettes, each with its own napkin-ring, and even a set of old-fashioned glass knife-rests which the servant would carefully lay when setting the table for dinner.

Of gadgetry we had none. With Bangalore's cool weather, we never felt the need for a domestic refrigerator, even if such a thing had been available in our time. We ate only fresh food bought from the bazaar and cooked daily. If there was anything left over from dinner that we wanted to keep, it went into a dhoolie or meat-safe, a sort of cupboard with sides and doors of fine wire-mesh which stood or hung in the back verandah to catch the cool night air. This kept the food from going bad before it was eaten the next day. In place of a coffee percolator we poured boiling water onto freshly ground coffee powder contained in a grey enamel jug from which we would then gently decant the decoction into our cups. To make our own ice-cream we would borrow a friend's pail which we would have to churn by hand in a wooden bucket filled with ice and salt, and to keep our drinking-water cool we used porous earthen containers called *goozhas* made by local potters from red clay fired in country kilns. To iron their clothes my sisters used a smoothing-iron heated over a small stove, but later went in for a box-iron which could be filled with live coals. Our "blender" was, of course, the ubiquitous kitchen *masala* stone, of which more anon.

Though modern sewerage came relatively late to Bangalore, we did have a good supply of pure piped water available day and night. The pressure was so great that I could water a plant thirty feet away by directing a jet onto it just by pressing my hand to the garden tap. It is very different today when, thanks to inept and corrupt city planning, many householders who do not have an underground cistern and pump to keep an overhead tank full are put to the hardship of waking up at night to collect whatever water trickles out of their taps. We had a tap in each bathroom and another in the back

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verandah where the washing-up was done. The servant washed the kitchen things while we younger children did the crockery, glassware and cutlery, all in a large basin, for we had no sink (which in India meant a cesspool). Under each bathroom tap there was a large tub or drum in which to store water, both to have some ready to hand and to act as a reserve against any failure of supply, which was rare. We had no showers, not only for lack of space for a cubicle but also because we lacked running hot water. There were too many in the family for the luxury of bath-tubs to loll in, and anyway, lying in one's own used, soapy water was not considered a clean habit in India, and we preferred to bathe by pouring water over ourselves with a dipper. This we did from a bucket of warm water that was carried in from the kitchen. Dirty water flowed out through a pipe in the wall into a cess-pool to be used later by the mali to water the plants.

If you wonder how Anglo-Indians managed to keep so many different servants on their comparatively moderate incomes, the answer is simple. Servants, like all else, came very cheap in those days, so cheap, in fact, that when I recall their hard and menial work and the sometimes callous way we treated them, I am ashamed at what I now realise was sheer exploitation. Ours, I feel, were always underpaid, and it is no excuse to say that we paid them the going rate, for this was largely determined by their big families and the sheer numbers of their class, all desperate for work. An ayah, whether as cook, housemaid or nursemaid, could be had for a mere eight rupees a month, supplemented by the barest of rations or food left over from the table. (Being Christians, they had no taboos as regards diet.) The monthly pay of a butler, whom we called "Boy" without realising the insult, was twelve rupees - less than a pound then, or half an Australian dollar today. And if one could not afford this, there was always a teenage *chokra* (house boy) or *thai* (maid) to be had for half that. As a result, many Anglo-Indian families kept two or even three servants who between them would cook, serve at table, wash up later, dust the furniture and run errands.

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Not that we as a family kept so many servants in Bangalore. As my mother had been surrounded by servants most of her life, and so had never learnt to sew or cook, we kept a kitchen-ayah, the only full-time servant we could then afford. Ours was a widow with six children, four of whom went to the local free-school while the youngest two accompanied her to work where she could keep an eye on them. Their names, almost predictably, were Teresa and Francis which he pronounced Francisc. I used to play with them and push them on our swing, a long heavy chain that hung from a branch of our wood-apple tree. They in turn used to mock and laugh at my broken Tamil. They shared their mother's morning coffee and bread that we provided, and also half of the bigger afternoon meal of rice, vegetable curry (rarely meat) and dhal that she cooked in our kitchen. The other half she took home for her family's dinner. I am sure we did not pay her enough, and as my mother was never good with servants, I recall her often scolding the ayah over the suspected market penny that she undoubtedly made - and even deserved. Yet when she complained of feeling unwell or of sickness at home, my mother lost no time in producing one home-remedy or other. Among them were cinnamon-ammoniated-quinine, pepper-and-garlic decoction or the smoke of smouldering turmeric to be inhaled for the relief of congestion, and Little's Oriental Balm for aches and pains.

The ayah did the marketing each morning and cooked twice a day. Anglo-Indian cuisine was about the only cultural item that we could claim as peculiarly our own. It consisted of the tastiest elements of Indian, English and Portuguese cooking with local variations. The more exotic ones had names like mollee made with egg or fish, country captain (which we called capon), masala chops, and tamarind fry to supplement a variety of curries, dhals, foogarths, fresh chutneys and side-dishes, most of which our ayah knew how to make. These were eaten with rice or chapatti's prepared in various ways. Though we made our own breakfast of porridge, eggs and coffee (the *appams* would already have come to the door), the ayah would cook and serve our lunch of rice, curry and lentils and a snack for afternoon tea. After washing up, she would go home for her own noon meal and rest, as we never kept servants on the premises. She

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would return in time to cook dinner, which consisted of a tureen of beef soup with the marrow floating in it, separate dishes of meat and vegetables, and a dessert of one kind or other, (I specially remember stewed fruit, caramel custard and sago pudding with jaggery syrup among them.) all of which she would place in a hot-case before finally going home at dusk. We children dusted the house, washed up after dinner and ran our own errands, but the ayah had to keep her kitchen utensils and floor clean. Sweeper and mali were shared with neighbours, as was the dhobi, an arrangement that worked to everyone's satisfaction.

For a time in 1927 we kept a sais or groom to attend to the horse and carriage that my father bought as an investment just before he retired. It was intended both as a family conveyance, especially to take the four of us younger children to school and back, and to add to the family income by hiring it out, as did some other pensioners. The idea was short-lived, however, for one day the sais, probably in his cups, seems to have struck the horse on its cheek with a curry-comb while grooming it - and then made the mistake of going round by its rear to continue doing so. The first we knew of what followed was a thud and a shout from the stables where, on running out, we found the sais lying half-conscious from a kick in the stomach, fortunately without any vital injury. After bringing him round with a dose of brandy and getting the story from him, my father gave him a month's pay and sent him packing. He sold the horse and carriage soon after when he realised he was no businessman and had been making a loss from the start. I missed the horse's soft and friendly snuffle that he used to give me on my evening visits to his stable, and also the lingering smell of horse-gram on the boil, the water from which was used to make a thick, tasty pepper-water that went well with our *appams*.

These *appams*, which we pronounced oppers or hoppers, were fermented rice pan-cakes with frilly brown edges that were brought to the house early each morning by a woman who made them in the patch. She was just one of a variety of vendors who saved us endless shopping by bringing things to the door to sell at prices well below

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bazaar rates. After the *appam* woman would come the egg-man from a near-by village, his face pitted and eyes almost blinded from childhood small-pox, his stick tapping the ground as he sang out his long-drawn "*kolee mottai*" (fowl's eggs) which he carried in a basket slung from his shoulder. He would sit at the step of the back verandah while my mother held every egg to the light, then floated them all in water. Only clear ones that sank were accepted (indeed, few failed the test, for they were always fresh). The vendors took their money - four annas for a dozen eggs, six *appams* for an anna - gave my mother her change and the latest bazaar news, and went their way. These were not the only house-to-house vendors. They came throughout the day, except in the heat of the afternoon when everyone took a siesta. Some had fixed prices, but most invited a bargain which my mother usually won, for with her big family she was a good customer, not to be lost to some rival. And if it happened that she did not have ready cash at hand, they would say in Tamil "Never mind, Ma. Tomorrow will do". They considered their first sale of the day, which they called *boney*, to be particularly auspicious, and would reduce the price in the certainty that it would bring them luck and enable them to sell all their remaining stock, which was usually perishable, by the end of the day. They were a friendly lot, and I must mention a few more.

Besides the peanut vendor and the seller of "Old Man's Beard" (a sort of fairy floss strung out in crisp threads of pink and white), there was the curd-seller who carried her large, red earthen pot on her head. She would ladle the curd into one of our cups, and we would eat it mixed with sugar. It was said she never washed her pot, but left it with the remnant of the curd inside to serve as a link for the next day's supply. Later she would return with a large, flat basket full of whatever fruit was in season. In the hot weather these would usually be delicious mangoes for which the near-by British district of Salem and the little state of Banganapalli were famous. There were other fruit at other times: oranges, grapes, custard-apples, sapotas and the long, yellowing papaya which thrived so well locally. We would help to lift her basket off her head and place it on the door-step, then back on again when bargaining and payment were done. The baker

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delivered our two loaves each day, part of a large supply which he carried in a big, round basket balanced by some miracle on the carrier of his cycle. Once a week he would return, his basket exchanged for a large tin-box full of freshly-baked biscuits from which we would have a choice of ginger-nuts, short-bread, butter-biscuits, or rusks. He would also bring around curry-puffs, sausage-rolls and fancy cakes of many kinds - butter beans, lemon tarts, sponge rolls and chocolate meringues, - all made in his own bakery and costing just an anna a cake.

The Hardbake Man was named for the special kind of fudge he sold. It was made mainly from ground cashew-nut, sugar and milk seasoned with cardamom, so delicious that we felt we could never eat enough. He also sold us gaudily wrapped tins of guava jelly, ruby-red and crystal-clear, which we ate with our chapattis at afternoon tea. Where the Polly Hawker got his name from I cannot tell, but his mark was a small two-wheeled cart pulled by an equally small trotting-bull. He peddled every household need from pins to boot-polish, which he would almost thrust on us at ridiculously low prices. A Chinese man (John Chinaman to us), who was a walking cloth-shop, would call once a month, an ever-happy smile on his face and a hefty bundle of fabrics on his back. He did not mind how little, if any, you bought, and seemed to take pleasure merely in displaying his silks, crepes and tussorees on the front verandah floor. This done, he would neatly fold, stack and rewrap them in a large khaki sheet, knot it tightly, hoist the heavy bundle onto his shoulder and go cheerily on to the next house. Less willing to so burden himself was the ice-cream man who, displaying a capitalist spirit, employed a coolie to carry his stuff. (Appellations like "coolie" came naturally to us.) This consisted of a tall metal pail of ice-cream - pink, peach or yellow in colour, it varied with the day, - set in a wooden vat filled with broken ice and salt, the whole wrapped in gunny-sacking. He would churn the ice-cream by hand before serving us at an anna a saucerful, help lift the vat back onto his coolie's head and depart.

Our favourite visitor was the snake-charmer, who doubled as magician. He would turn up playing a high-pitched tune in jig-time on a fiddle with a single wire string, spread his "props" on the ground

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and start his act. He carried his cobra, bereft of its fangs, in a flat basket, and would stir it into an upright position to the accompaniment of music played on a pipe made from a dried gourd. With hood raised, it would strike at the back of his hand whenever he offered it, and for an added thrill he would produce a mongoose and stage a mock fight between the two. His magic tricks were mostly sleight-of-hand, some of them performed with the help of a bag and a couple of coconut shells in which, through clever palming, he would make a set of cloth balls appear and vanish. Most memorable of all, perhaps because he used to come around only at night after the arrival of his goods by an evening train, was the *nungoo* man with his basket of what we called ice-apples, the fruit of the palmyra palm. He would have already removed the purple, outer husk containing the three discs of firm, translucent jelly from which we had to remove a thin brown inner skin before swallowing it. I was to get to know this fruit only too well, as I shall relate later.

Not only goods, but services as well were brought to the door. The dhobi was, of course, the most regular. There was a whole caste of such people - *vanniyars* in Tamil - whose traditional work was the washing of clothes and who formed a necessary part of every town, village or military camp in India. They worked in special areas known as dhobi ghats that consisted of rows of stone cisterns filled with water and flanked by slabs of sloping granite on which your clothes and linen were soaped, pummeled, bashed and rinsed before being hung up or laid on grass to dry. The dhobi would turn up each week, a bundle of clothes on his back, - pants, shirts, bedsheets and pillow-cases, napkins and table-sheets, all perfectly washed and ironed, - lay them neatly on one of our cots, each in its own stack, then visibly flick them through his fingers, enabling you to count them. The tally correct, you ticked it off in a dhobi-book in which the names of the items were tabulated. He would then empty the soiled-linen basket onto the floor, sort the contents into mounds, then start the count. Each article would be shaken out to make sure only one was picked up, and in order never to lose count, he would keep repeating the number, - “four, four, four” - until he picked up number five. After the number of each kind of article had been noted in its

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column and the grand total counted again, he would bundle the clothes in a bed-sheet and leave, returning punctually with them seven days later. Rarely did he default on an article, and if he did, he was sure to turn up with it the next week. The allegation that, in the interim, he himself wore your best shirt on festival occasions in his patch or village was, he avowed, a canard.

Other less regular callers were the bottle-man who would pay us half a rupee for all the old bottles and newspapers that we would have carefully accumulated since his last visit, the cobbler or *chuckla* with his roll of leather and his small bag of tools (half-soles, full-soles, patched uppers, or even a new pair of shoes made to measure; nothing was beyond his skill), and the cotton-beater with his tautly-strung bow which he would hang from a rafter in an outhouse, then strum vigorously through the cotton that he would already have removed from a hardened mattress. The beating finished, he would restuff the mattress and neatly stitch it again. There was the tinker with his bellows, pliers and flux to mend the leak in the bathroom drum; the knife-grinder with his treadle-driven grind-stone that caused the sparks to fly; the stone-worker who would use his cold-chisel and hammer to roughen the surface of the kitchen *ammi* or masala-stone made smooth by daily grinding; the barber who would cut your hair on the back verandah with his own scissors and, if you liked, shave you too with his cut-throat razor (we preferred to shave ourselves, my father with his own cut-throat, the elder boys with Gillette safety razors), and the tailor who sat cross-legged on a reed mat, cutting and sewing our night-suits (our name for pyjamas which, to us, were the loose nether-dress of the north Indian male), the girls' skirts and petticoats, and often our school shirts and shorts as well. He amazed us by the amount he accomplished in a day on our hand-driven Singer. Individually or together, these house-to-house purveyors of petty goods and services certainly helped to make life much easier.

The sight of them and the sounds of their calls are memories now, replaced in Canberra by the thud of the newspaper on our driveway thrown by the delivery man through his car window, and

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the roar and squeak of garbage-trucks on their weekly rounds. Of motor vehicles we presently have more and of greater variety parked on our short street than I would have seen in a day on one of our Bangalore roads in the 1920s. I can recall only three families in Richmond Town who owned cars. Motor-cycles were more common, some of them fitted with side-cars to serve as family conveyances. Today, Bangalore's traffic runs nose to tail, choking its inadequate roads, destroying its silence and polluting its once clean air. There are other things that I especially miss on my all too rare returns to my home town. The clock on the Scotch Kirk tower no longer chimes the hour as it did when we passed beneath it in our carriage on our way to Russell Market. My school bell that rang the Angelus to call us from our dormitory to early chapel, then to the refectory, study and classroom, is not just silent now; it has been removed altogether, and with it a link with my boyhood. But saddest of all are the missing trees, and with them the birds that we got to know so well: the flashing Golden Oriole, the shy green barbet and his not-so-shy cousin, the copper-smith, the hysterical *koel* or Indian cuckoo, and the crow-pheasant lurking in the hedges that lined the roads leading out of Bangalore. Only the sparrows, crows and minahs are now left, drab remnants of a beautiful past. Sic transit...!

Other less happy memories remain. The bazaars and railway stations were never without beggars, many of them pitiable cases - crippled, blind or leprous, - but invariably with some able-bodied ones hanging about for what they thought they might be able to get. The servants "patches", such as the one in which our ayah lived, consisted of little more than hovels lining narrow lanes paved with flag-stones and served by only the most elementary drainage. Water was supplied through streetside taps to which womenfolk carried their large earthen or, less often, brass vessels to fetch their entire household needs. Only slightly better was Shoolay, a congested area off Brigade Road dating back to well before British times and consisting of mean houses and petty shops fronting directly on to narrow streets. Here lived a sprinkling of poor Anglo-Indians whose womenfolk would emerge, shabbily dressed, their faces drawn with anxiety, to start their rounds to ask for charity. They would visit our

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house for what we could give them - an old frock or a pair of pants and perhaps a four-anna piece, the smallest silver coin there was. We would hear tales, probably true, of idle husbands or sick children, of empty cupboards and unpaid debts. Unfortunately, there was always more than a suspicion of prostitution among these "Shoolay Marys", as we sometimes rudely called them. It was a trade kept going by the many local British troops, despite the OUT OF BOUNDS sign put up by the Garrison Military Police at the entrance to the locality. Another regular suppliant was a grizzled old sepoy who never failed to wear his Great War medals hanging by faded ribbons from the breast of his well-worn khaki tunic. Perhaps he had been a bandsman, for he would earn his money by playing "Tipperary" and "Keep The Home Fires Burning" on an ancient clarinet.

Most Anglo-Indians were comparatively well off, and were not seriously affected by the Great Depression, for there had been little or no contraction in the government departments or public utilities where they traditionally found steady employment. There were, of course, exceptions. Government servants like Pat and Ralph had to take a cut in salary, and the few cases of retrenchment that I knew of caused serious hardship. Arthur Davenport, a school-friend of Pat's, lost his job with the Cable and Wireless in the Persian Gulf. He opened a hair-dressing saloon on South Parade, but it did not thrive and closed with a loss. The Claudius brothers, products of Bishop Cotton's, whose parents had left them a small inheritance which they lost to a swindler, started a wool-knitting business which did not fare well. They changed to professional photography and were barely breaking even when the war came, giving them a chance to get commissions. Margaret's beau, Charles Leslie, one of seven children of a Scottish tea-planter and an estate worker, could not get a job after doing his Senior Cambridge at Bishop Cotton's. When the tea trade collapsed, his father sent him tea in plywood cases to hawk by the measure - along with the family silver. I do not know how my mother found the money or the room in Rose Lane to take him and two of his sisters in as free guests, while Bishop Cotton's kept his brother and two other sisters as boarders on reduced fees. A particularly sad case I personally knew of was that of a Mr Nicholas,

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a gentlemanly person who lost his job on the railways in Malaya. He was middle-aged and had a wife and four young children, one of whom was in my scout troop. He invested his provident fund in two lorries, hoping to run a transport business, but soon found there was little demand for them. He sold them at a loss and started a boarding-house, but that too failed when his last two boarders ran away, leaving their bills unpaid. The parents finally slipped from middle-class respectability into penury, while still somehow managing to let the children finish school. But such cases were fortunately the exception, and ended when the war brought jobs for all, not least for Anglo-Indians who flocked to join the forces.

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